



WorldWideWorkplace Diversity

FACILITATOR GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

This 60-80 minute session explores diversity in the workplace and how it is impacting the labour market of today and tomorrow. This session is intended to challenge students' perceptions of diversity and to help them understand what has shaped their own perceptions therefore better equipping them for a diverse workplace.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Develop an understanding of terminology relevant to the discussion of diversity
2. Be challenging their perceptions about diversity
3. Identify who contributes to Canada's diverse workforce
4. Develop an awareness of how diversity impacts today's and tomorrow's labour market

MATERIALS

Hand Out 1 – Optical Illusions: What do You See?

Hand Out 2 – People of Diversity: What do you see?

Hand Out 3 – Respecting Diversity

Hand Out 4 – Diversity in the Workplace – Consider the Potential!

Hand Out 5 – Scenarios of Diversity in the Workplace

Employing a Diverse Workforce: Making it Work, Alberta Employment and Immigration



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OVERVIEW AND TIMELINES

Introduction

Lecture- What is Diversity? Terminology related to Diversity

Group Activity 1 – The Penny

Group Activity 2 – Optical Illusions

Lecture – Perception

Lecture – What Makes Canada So Unique?

Lecture – Who Contributes to Canada's Diverse Workforce?

Lecture – The Impact of Diversity on Today and Tomorrow's Labour Market

Wrap up

Introduction

This lesson is intended to bring light to the subject of diversity, more specifically, diversity within the workplace. Canada prides itself as a diverse country; therefore it is important for students to understand the evolution of Canadian diversity and how it shapes our country today. This lesson addresses diversity in general and then focuses on diversity in the workplace. It is important to teach these two topics together as each student must understand their own perceptions in order to see how their perceptions may affect them in the workplace. This lesson will focus on who contributes to a diverse workplace, and the benefits of a diverse workplace. Students' views of diversity will be challenged, and their perceptions broadened, as they consider an array of scenarios from another viewpoint.

Lecture – What is Diversity?

Terminology Related to Diversity

Diversity – The quality of being different; the ideology of including people from a diverse range of background.

Discuss with students what it means to be diverse. Is there diversity in the classroom? In the community?

Many of these words will be used throughout the lesson and it is important for students to understand their meanings and how they relate to diversity.



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Diversity

Perceptions – The “model” a person creates of how the world works. Our perceptions shift as we acquire new information.

Assumption – A theory/idea that is taken for granted for the sake of an argument, and is taken as truth.

Stereotype – An oversimplified, false or generalized portrayal of a group of people. Stereotyping does not allow for exceptions or individual differences and prejudices a person’s ability, skills and personality based on unfair assumptions.

Inclusion – The practice of including all groups of people regardless of differences.

Workplace diversity – Personnel that includes differences in gender, age, ethnicity, colour, language and other socio-economic factors.

Visible minority – In Canada, visible minorities are defined as "persons, other than Aboriginals, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."

Activity 1 – The Penny

Ask students to describe a penny. Write down on the blackboard some of their descriptions. Leave this activity and go on to Activity 2.

(This activity is taken from Gray Poehnell’s workshop *Guiding Circles*.)

Activity 2 – Optical illusions

Distribute Hand Out 1 Optical Illusions: What do you see? Ask students what they see. If asked to see something different, do they see it? This will initiate discussion in the classroom about perception. What is perception? Where does it come from? When given more information, do our perceptions change? How does this make them feel?



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Top up for facilitator Handout 1

Answers to Hand out 1 – Optical Illusions: What do You See?

Pictures from left to right:

- Teach – Learn
- Rabbit – Duck
- Aboriginal face carving – Inuit going into cave
- Me – You
- Profile of old man – Old man standing near lady
- Old woman – Young lady

Go back to Activity 1. Ask students to change their perception of the penny, really stop and look and/or think about the penny. Can they find more words to describe it?

Lecture – Perception

The facilitator or teacher will ask the students to observe the people in Hand Out 2- Who are these people? What do they do? What makes them diverse? The facilitator or teacher can have fun with this, as the idea is to get the students to make some preconceived assumptions whether right or wrong. This leads the class into the discussion of terminology relevant to diversity.

Discuss with students the pictures. When they see just one of the photos, do they make certain assumptions? When they get more information, have their perceptions changed? Did they base their thoughts from stereotypes?

Top up for facilitators for Handout 2

Picture 1: Disabled athletes running track and field. These athletes are running times as close to times of abled athletes. At first only show top half of picture. Then show the full picture.

Picture 2: Tom Cruise as a child and as an adult. Could you tell from his first picture that he would become one of the worlds top celebrities? What makes him diverse?

Picture 3: Marilyn Manson as a child and as an adult. Could you tell from his first picture that he would become a controversial alternative musician? What makes him diverse?

Brainstorm with the students about diverse groups within their community. Now assign each group a “diverse group” and have them brainstorm the challenges that they might encounter in our society. Challenge them to “walk a mile in someone else’s shoes”. Discuss what this saying means.



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Now that we have discussed what diversity means, and how our perceptions shape our thoughts about diversity, we must discuss how diversity has shaped Canada from its beginnings

WHAT MAKES CANADA SO UNIQUE?

Where We Have Been

This section is intended to give students some information regarding Canada's history of diversity. Below is a brief summary of our history; facilitators/teachers are to deliver this as they see fit, according to the students' grade levels.

Background for facilitators:

Diversity is nothing new to Canadians. From our beginnings we have respected our differences. We live in an officially bilingual country. Bilingualism is at the very core of Canada's approach to diversity. It has been a defining characteristic of Canadian society from the very beginning of its constitutional development. The Official Languages Act of 1969 requires The Government of Canada to give equal status, rights and privileges to both languages in all federal institutions and requires federal institutions to serve Canadians in their official language of choice.

Multiculturalism was key to developing Canada in the later half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Canada's immigration policy was to supply a labour force primarily for settlement and agriculture, then to support industrialization. Many people from different backgrounds were beginning to call Canada home; ethno cultural diversity was an essential ingredient in a distinct Canadian identity.

By the 1970's, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt an official Multiculturalism Policy. This policy provided for programs and services to support ethno cultural associations and to help individuals overcome barriers to their full participation in Canadian society. In 1982, the multicultural character of Canada gained constitutional recognition. It specified that the courts were to interpret the Charter "in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada". By virtue of this section of the Charter, Canada became a constitutional multicultural state. – [Canadian Heritage website](#)

Discuss with the class what it means to be multicultural.

Where We Are Now



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Diversity

In the 1950's, 92% of Canada's population growth was a product of its birth rate. Today, immigration into Canada surpasses the natural birth rate, and accounts for 53% of the overall population growth. It is estimated that one in six Canadians is a member of a visible minority.

Multiculturalism is obviously something that makes Canada very unique, but it is not the only contributor to our diverse country. In our acceptance of other cultures, it has allowed for other minorities to step forward and claim their rights as citizens.

Brainstorm with students which minorities these would be.

Hand Out 3 – Respecting Diversity

Distribute Hand Out 3 and read aloud. Brainstorm with the students where they think their perceptions come from: family, media, teachers, friends, and/or work?

Engage the students in a conversation about their working environment. Is there diversity in the workplace? How have their perceptions affected their working environment?

Lecture – Who Contributes to Canada's Diverse Workforce?

Industry specialists say that roughly 80% of the Canadian workforce is made up of women, visible minorities, aboriginal people and people with disabilities. In order for businesses to survive and compete within a strong competitive economy, they need to find the best talent, and that means reaching out to visibly diverse candidates. Employers need to shift their traditional structures to meet the needs of their employees.

Hand Out 4 – Diversity in the Workplace – Consider the Potential!

Discuss and debrief Hand Out 4 with students. Refer to [Employing a Diverse Workforce: Making it Work](#), Alberta Employment and Immigration for more information.

What issues might arise in a diverse workplace, either good or bad? Brainstorm with students.



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Top up list for facilitators

Good

- *Better communication*
- *Flexible working hours*
- *Improved working conditions*
- *Good problem solving skills*
- *Increased Productivity*

Bad

- *Sense of entitlement*
- *Lack of communication*
- *Bullying*
- *Harassment*

Hand Out 5 – Scenarios of Diversity in the Workplace

Discuss and debrief Hand Out 5 with students. What perceptions, stereotypes, assumptions might arise with each scenario? What is the course of action that should be taken, and what strategies would best help each situation? With diversity of any kind, good communication and finding a common ground is the key.

Lecture – The Impact of Diversity on Today’s and Tomorrow’s Labour Market

Many factors shape the labour shortage in certain sectors of the Canadian economy: an aging society with a shrinking pool of workers to take their place, new jobs created with the onset of new technologies, higher consumer demands, etc. Global competition requires a strong labour market therefore Canada needs to fill this labour shortage. The workforce has to be strengthened and replenished, drawing from the skills of **all** Canadians and also through recruiting globally.

To maintain this strong workforce, the workplace needs to be inclusive and accepting of diversity. Having a diverse workplace that draws upon the strengths of its differences not only makes an attractive place to work for its employees, but also makes a more effective and productive environment.

What is the value of a diverse workforce? Brainstorm with students what these might be. Many employers have benefited by improved productivity, the ability to compete globally, fresh ideas and perspectives, and improved corporate profile, just to name a few. Most of all, “diversity is related to global business success



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and the bottom line” (John F. Smith, CEO and President, General Motors Corporation).

Wrap Up

We are all part of a very unique and diverse Canada. In many ways our differences are our strengths. These differences allow us to look at many situations from a unique perspective; that is, a Canadian perspective made up from a diverse group of citizens.

However, before we can truly embrace diversity as a culture, we must individually be aware of our perceptions. People are uncomfortable when they have to deal with something they don't understand. This discomfort usually leads to stereotypes and assumptions. Education is the only way to getting past these stereotypes. Once diversity is discussed and challenged on a personal level, the ripple effect will take place. New perspectives will come forth, and individuals will be better equipped to deal with diversity in all facets of society, especially the workplace.

“For those who have seen the Earth from space, and for the hundreds and perhaps thousands more who will, the experience most certainly changes your perspective. The things that we share in our world are far more valuable than those which divide us” (Donald Williams).

What can you do to challenge your perceptions?

Reference:

Canadian Heritage Website Homepage, <http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca>

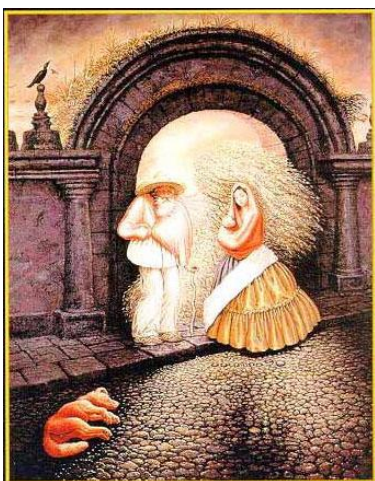
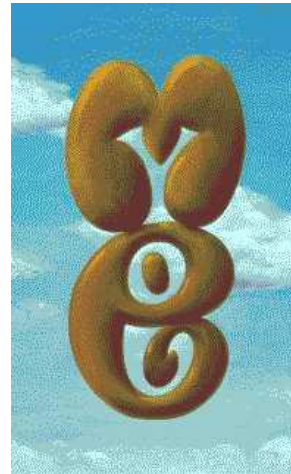
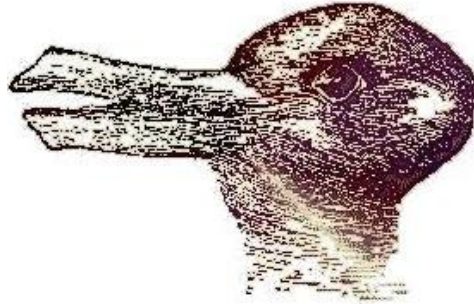
With thanks to:

Central Alberta Diversity Association, <http://www.cadiversity.ca>



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Optical Illusions: What do You See?





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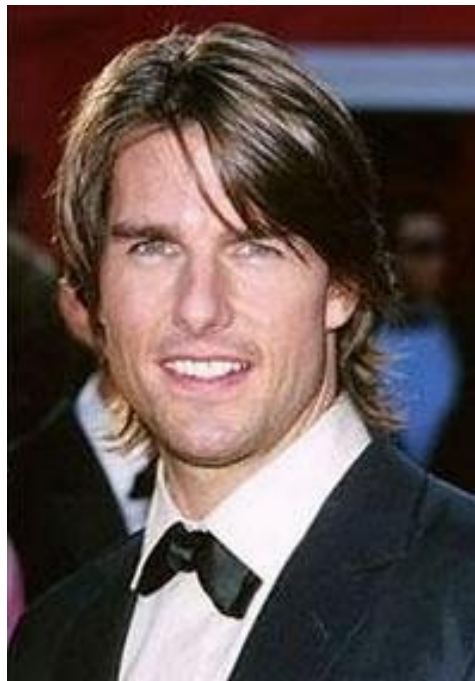
People of Diversity- What do you see?



Only show top half of athletes at first. Ask what they do, who they are, what makes them diverse?



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Respecting Diversity

At school, you will have the opportunity to develop skills that help you to get along with people of diverse backgrounds and social values—skills you will also need in the workplace. Which of the following statements describes you?

- ▶ I accept that everyone has different life experiences. The other people in my classes may live, think, talk and act in ways very different from mine.
- ▶ I can let other people express opinions I don't share without debating or arguing with them. This doesn't mean that I agree with their opinions. It just means that I respect their right to have them.
- ▶ I am aware that well-mannered people treat everyone with respect, regardless of age, gender, status or position.
- ▶ I know I don't have to like someone to learn from them or work with them.

Ask students why the statement best describes them? What influences helped to shape them this way?





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Diversity in the Workplace – Consider the Potential!

Aboriginal people: Within a decade, one out of every five new entrants into the labour market will be Aboriginal, offering their knowledge and skills. .

Immigrants: A highly skilled workforce, immigrants bring new perspectives to companies. They help Alberta firms reach overseas markets.

Older workers: They make up an increasing percentage of the population. Many older workers are now part of the baby boomer bulge. Their strength is their experience.

Persons with disabilities: Representing one-sixth of all Canadians, persons with disabilities have an established track record of being reliable, productive and innovative workers.

Visible minorities: Source of skilled and educated workers, visible minorities are expected to make up about 20 percent of Canadian adults by 2016. They bring a range of approaches, skills, ideas and perspectives to the workplace.

Youth: Young people are keen to learn. At work, youth want to share their knowledge, energy and enthusiasm. Their skill levels are higher than ever before.



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Scenarios of Diversity in the Workplace

1. Jane works for a company that often has last minute emergency meetings after 5pm. This causes her stress as she often is scrambling to find last minute childcare for her two children. She has approached her male manager about her concerns, but has yet to see any changes.
2. A 17-year-old student works at a local coffee shop. She is often left by herself after 9pm till the shop closes. She has approached her middle aged male manager, because she knows that she must be working with a person 18 years or older after 9pm. Her manager says not to worry, she is almost 18 and if there are any problems she can call him at home and he'll be right over. She still feels uncomfortable with the situation, and doesn't want to press the issue, as she doesn't want to get fired.
3. Susie has a younger brother who has Downs Syndrome. Susie works at the pizza store with Bobby. In conversation, Bobby often jokes around with Susie saying things like "that's so retarded." Susie is very offended by Bobby, and she thinks he is young and immature. Bobby can't understand why Susie is so annoyed by him.
4. Bill is an employee at the grocery store. He is invited to the company picnic and asked to bring a guest. Bill and his boyfriend arrive at the picnic and Bill introduces him to his co-workers. The following workday Bill notices people are treating him differently and are awkward around him. He begins to wonder if it was a bad idea to let his co-workers know of his sexual orientation.
5. Luke is hired at the ice-cream store. He is very upset when the schedule for work comes out because he is hardly scheduled to work. When he approaches his boss asking why he hardly has any hours, she replies that between his school and sports, he has very few hours that he can work and she feels that work is less of a priority to him. She would rather give the hours to her other employees that aren't so busy.

